

22 June 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR: George Lauder
Director, Public Affairs Office

SUBJECT: Memoranda for the Record of Conversations with John
Sherwood, Washington Times Reporter

1. Attached are memoranda for the record of my three telephone conversations about the OSS records with John Sherwood of The Washington Times. [redacted] talked first to Sherwood on Monday, 18 June, and [redacted] talked to Sherwood yesterday. I told [redacted] that I would send these reports on my conversations.

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2. Sherwood's piece in today's Washington Times seems harmless enough. I was glad that he got off the missing war diaries business, but sorry that he did not give the DCI credit for his initiative in releasing these documents.

3. Now that this story and yesterday's piece in the Post have appeared, I suspect that there will be more press queries about these records.

[redacted]
J. Kenneth McDonald

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Attachments

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20 June 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Telephone conversation with John Sherwood, Washington Times,
20 June 1984 (636 3264)

1. John Taylor, Reference Archivist in the Modern Military Headquarters Branch at the National Archives, called and asked if I would talk to John Sherwood of the Washington Times, who was with him in his office. I agreed (having told Sherwood yesterday that I would talk to him again today), but first asked Taylor about the war diaries, which Sherwood has questioned me about yesterday. He told me that the S.I. and S.O. war diaries that the Agency withdrew from the 194 feet recently transferred to NARS, contain 10,000 pages. Taylor knows that these files were withheld so that CIA could respond to a FOIA case, and he had been informed (correctly, I understand from [redacted]) that they will be returned to NARS in about two months.

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2. Taylor then put Sherwood on the line. He asked more questions about why these war diaries were not being released now, and I explained again that the law requires the Agency to respond to FOIA requests, and that we could not drop this case in mid process to transfer the documents. I tried to convince Sherwood that the temporary delay in releasing the war diaries was not the story here, but that the release of the 194 cubic feet of OSS documents, and the rich historical information they contain, was what was newsworthy. I'm not sure I succeeded, since he seems convinced that there is some secret reason why CIA has held up releasing the war diaries, which must therefore be of central importance.

3. I also explained that these OSS records are being released as the first step in a selective declassification program that Mr. Casey had promised to Senator Durenberger in their exchange of correspondence last October. I read the operative paragraph from the DCI's letter to Sherwood, and explained how the DCI's commitment to release older historical records was related to the FOIA relief bill now pending in Congress.

4. Sherwood told me that he is looking through various groups of OSS documents, trying to find something to hang his story on. Using our list of the records transferred, I suggested some groups as especially promising. I suspect, however, that he is still convinced that the really good stuff is in the S.I. and S.O. war diaries that the Agency has withheld.

[redacted]

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J. Kenneth McDonald
Chief, History Staff

21 June 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Telephone Conversation with John Sherwood, reporter for The Washington Times, 2:50 p.m. 21 June 1984 (636 3264)

1. John Sherwood called this afternoon while I was out and talked with [redacted] who told him he could not discuss the OSS records. Sherwood called [redacted] at Public Affairs, who suggested that I continue as Sherwood's contact here on the OSS records.

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2. I called Sherwood, and found that he had just finished his story for tomorrow's paper. He read me what sounded like the lead paragraph, which focused on CIA's withholding the war diaries. The general line was that while the war diaries were the most promising material, the CIA was withholding them to respond--"they say"--to FOIA requests. He asked if that was correct, and I said I thought not.

3. I explained that while the war diaries would undoubtedly be interesting, they were but a small part of the 194 feet now being released. This surprised Sherwood, who had the impression that they were a major portion. I noted that while John Taylor at NARS had described these war diaries as containing about 10,000 pages, which sounds massive, they probably only filled a few boxes--probably only a foot or two of the 194 cubic feet being released. In any event, the Agency had no choice but to withhold them, since the law requires that it respond fully to FOIA requests, and these war diaries had been requested under the Act. Moreover, I explained that since CIA will transfer some 2500 cubic feet of documents over the next year or so, it seemed wrong to focus on a few boxes of material held up for a couple of months.

4. Sherwood also asked why CIA had kept these World War II records from the public for some forty years. I explained the need to protect sources and methods in intelligence records, so that they ordinarily have to remain classified--unlike most military classified records, for example--even after the events or operations they concern become known. I noted that intelligence methods in World War II could still need protection, and that some people who worked with OSS could still not be identified. Having seen the marker cards in the files noting documents withheld, Sherwood was already aware that some of these records remain classified for national security reasons and have not been released. He also knows a large CIA team of reviewers needed several years to declassify these records.

4. Sherwood told me that the his story is mainly an account of how an OSS Special Operations officer, Lieut. William Downey, USNR, undertook a mission to capture a German V-1 bomb. He thought this more significant than the Washington Post's story today on how the OSS infringed copyrights in broadcasting translated Broadway songs to Germany.



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J. Kenneth McDonald
Chief, History Staff

18 June 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Telephone conversation with John Sherwood, Washington Times,
4:40 p.m. 18 June 1984 (636 3264)

1. After John Sherwood, a reporter for The Washington Times, called while I was out, I called [redacted] in Public Affairs, who offered to return Sherwood's call. [redacted] of Public Affairs called me later in the afternoon, and said that Sherwood was inquiring about the release of OSS documents to the National Archives and Records Service (NARS), and that it was OK for me to talk to him about this if I wished.

2. I called Sherwood, who told me that he had already talked to Jill Merrill, Public Affairs officer at NARS, and John Taylor, the main Reference Archivist in the Modern Military Headquarters Branch at NARS (where the OSS records now are). He has seen the NARS news release, and knows that it will not go out in the NARS newsletter until around 11 July. John Taylor told him that of the 194 feet now transferred, the 'history narratives' are probably the most interesting. but that of these, the Secret Intelligence (SI) and Special Operations (SO) narratives were still at CIA. Sherwood wanted to know if I could give him any more information on these files, as well as any leads on other newsworthy files in the records now open at NARS. .

3. I assumed that Taylor was referring to the SI and SO war diaries that are still here, being processed in [redacted] for a FOIA request. [redacted] later confirmed this, and noted that these files probably would not be transferred to NARS for at least another two months.] I explained that these records were only temporarily delayed, and that there was a lot of other highly important material in the recently opened records. It is a pity that with all of these records actually released and open for Sherwood to look at, Taylor should direct his attention to the few boxes from this first batch that are not yet available.

4. As for other leads, I told Sherwood that although I had looked over the collection while it was here, I had not looked closely enough at any of the documents to give him specific advice about where to start his own research. Sherwood asked if I could see if anyone here--perhaps from the declassification review team--could give him any leads on the documents. I told him that I would look into this, but that the NARS people in Modern Military were clearly the best guides to these records now.

5. Sherwood asked if he could call me tomorrow when he was with John Taylor at NARS, and I agreed. Sherwood mentioned that he has covered a lot of National Archives stories, having been a reporter with The Washington Star for 19 years before joining The Washington Times.



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J. Kenneth McDonald
Chief, History Staff